

THE NESTING OF THE YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER AT RALEIGH, N. C.

BY C. S. BRIMLEY.

THE YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Dendroica dominica*) is a regular summer visitor at Raleigh, arriving in the spring from the middle to the end of March and leaving in September. While it is more or less numerous in all large tracts of pines and in all mixed woods containing large pines, it cannot be called plentiful anywhere; a fifty-acre tract of pines about half a mile from my house contains just five pairs this year, and they are more numerous there than in any other place I know of.

This Warbler commences nesting early in April, selecting as a site for its nest a horizontal limb usually, but not always, of a tall thin pine. Sometimes it builds its nest where the limb forks, but more often right on the limb, attached only to the limb itself or else laced to small twigs as well; one nest was built among and attached to small twigs only, but this nest was also essentially different in construction from any other we have ever taken and resembled the others only in the rough and unfinished character of the rim. The nest is usually much like a Pine Warbler's in general character, but lacks the black grape-vine bark which gives the latter such a dark appearance, and is also usually less compact, especially about the rim. The materials of which it is composed are weed stems, strips of trumpet-vine bark, fine grass, and caterpillar silk; the lining is of horsehair or feathers or both. The nest varies a good deal in size. The height of the nest varies from twenty to ninety feet or more, and the distance from the trunk from about three to twelve feet. While the female is building, she usually keeps silent, but sometimes chirps; the male is apt to be singing somewhere near by, but apparently does not care to go near the nest as he does not accompany the female when she goes to the nest to build. At such times the female often takes a roundabout route to get there, and her flight is usually more desultory and less suggestive than the straight business-like flight of the female Pine Warbler when approaching her nest.

The female apparently does all the incubating, as we have never

taken a nest yet when the male was not singing near by, though we have on three occasions observed the female come to the nest early in the morning just before we took it and so presume she has to feed herself as well as do all the work. This Warbler is the closest sitter I am acquainted with, never leaving the nest till the limb it is built on is jarred, and in a large majority of cases, not till the nest itself is touched. When she does conclude to quit she slips out of the nest and flutters vertically downward some six feet or more, but makes no pretense of a broken wing or any other affliction. The set is usually four, occasionally three. When one set is taken, the female goes to work, builds another nest, and lays another set.

The nest is very hard to find, in fact the only way to find one is to watch a pair of birds day after day until at last the female is detected building, and the nest located. As seems to be the case generally here with Pine Warblers and Gnatcatchers, it is easier to detect the Yellow-throated Warbler building when it first commences than later on when it is putting in the finishing touches.

The following list of all the nests we have found here will give a better idea of several details than any amount of general description.

1. Nest found April 25, 1888, about one third built in a large old field pine, the female only building. This was in a narrow strip of good-sized pines adjoining a large tract of woods. The nest was taken on May 11, and contained only one fresh egg. The nest was 65 feet high, and 12 feet from the trunk, and was larger and deeper than a Pine Warbler's, but the rim was thinner and more ragged, the nest was composed of grape-vine bark, horsehair, and a great quantity of white chicken feathers. The nest was not built on a limb, but attached by the sides and bottom to a number of small twigs, thus differing in situation, as well as in construction, from any other taken so far.

2. Nest found April 25, 1889, apparently just finished, but with no eggs. Took set of four from this nest on May 4, flushing the female from the nest on jarring the limb, eggs fresh. The nest was 20 feet high, 7 feet from the trunk, on a horizontal limb of the pine, and also laced to small twigs. The nest was much like a Pine Warbler's, but smaller and grayer, lacking the grape-vine bark of the latter. The nest was in a fifty-acre tract of pines where most of this year's nests were found.

3. Nest found just commenced on April 5, 1890, 42 feet, built on fork of pine limb some eight feet from the trunk. The set of four fresh eggs was taken April 25. The bird came to the nest while my brother was putting his climbers on. The nest was much like a Pine Warbler's, but with

no grapevine bark, but instead some bark of the trumpet-vine, and heavily lined with feathers; the rim was quite thin and loose, otherwise the nest was solid enough.

4. April 29, I found the same pair re-building, this time on a pine limb some 47 feet high and four or five feet from the trunk. On May 12 we took our second set of four from this pair, the eggs containing small embryos. The pine was tall and slim, and we had to stay it with ropes while taking the nest. The female stayed on the nest till it was touched. Nest similar to the preceding two.

5. May 15, I found this pair again re-building in a pine near where their first nest was (the second nest having been some 200 yards east of the first one), the pine being even taller and thinner than before. The nest was 58 feet high and 6 feet from the trunk, and the pine swayed frightfully, although stayed with ropes, when we took our third set of four on May 26. This nest was quite small, otherwise like the others.

6. On May 28 I started for the fourth time to look up this pair and duly found them, in no way discouraged, again building, this time near the second nest and in a respectable sort of pine, 44 feet high and four or five from the trunk. On June 7 we took our fourth set of four from this pair, and I think we were satisfied.

7. Found a second pair of birds building a well-built nest on a good-sized limb of a large pine, 42 feet high and about seven from the trunk. On April 22, 1890, we took a set of four fresh eggs from this nest. The nest was composed of weed stems, grass stems, and caterpillar silk, and heavily lined with horsehair.

8. On May 8, 1890, we found and again took a set of four from this pair. The nest was 38 feet high and some ten feet from the trunk, and was built and almost hidden in the lateral fork of a large limb. We found the nest by watching the bird go to it after feeding. This nest was made of the stems and leaves of a gray weed known as rabbit tobacco, pieces of cotton, cocoon silk, fine grass and horsehair, and weed stems, and was heavily lined with horsehair. The eggs contained small embryos.

9. April 24, I found a third pair of birds building a well-built nest in a medium-sized pine, 43 feet high and four feet from trunk. Took four eggs, slightly incubated, from it on May 3. The bird went to the nest while we were preparing to take it. This nest was very large, with very thick, strong walls made very largely of rabbit tobacco, the outside almost entirely of it, and was lined with feathers and horsehair. The nest, superficially, reminded one more of that of the Prairie Warbler, a bird which uses rabbit tobacco a great deal, but was much larger and thicker.

10. May 2, I found a nest just started by a fourth pair on a pine limb 44 feet high, some five or six from the trunk. The female was building in a desultory sort of way. We took a set of four fresh eggs on May 8. This nest was very small and only scantily lined with feathers, the lining being so thin that the eggs would have fallen through in one place if there had been nothing underneath.

11. I found this last pair re-building May 19, 43 feet from ground and

five or six from the trunk. We took a set of three on May 30. This nest was small, but better made than the previous one. The eggs contained small embryos.

All of the foregoing were found in a fifty-acre tract of pine woods. The following nests were found in mixed woods.

12. April 14, I found a nest just started in a tall, very thin pine some 50 feet high; a heavy rain came next day and the nest was deserted.

13. April 24, I found this pair re-building in a huge pine not far from the first, the nest some 90 feet high and 15 from the trunk. I did not trouble that pair any more.

BIRDS FOUND BREEDING ON SEVEN MILE BEACH, NEW JERSEY.

BY CHARLES S. SHICK.

ABOUT five years ago one of the richest ornithological fields open to collectors was Seven Mile Beach in Cape May County, New Jersey, a beautiful island, over seven miles long and from a quarter of a mile to a mile wide, densely covered with cedar, oak, pine, holly, sassafras and birch trees, nearly every one of them covered with long, rich pendants of *usnea* moss. The natural advantages offered here for nest building are unsurpassed.

I have watched the encroachments of man year after year. until now, to cap the climax, a seashore resort has been started and the axe of the woodman is clearing away many of the fine old trees on which the Fish Hawks formerly built their homes. In a few years more this island, which five years ago was the collector's paradise, will no longer be frequented by many birds that now summer there. I give a list of birds breeding there at the present time.

Larus atricilla. LAUGHING GULL.— During my eight years residence in South Jersey I have found this bird breeding abundantly each summer. On Gull Island, near Hereford Inlet, at the southern point of Seven Mile Beach, a vast colony congregates every year. Early in May and again about June 2 full sets of eggs can be found. The nests are built of sedge